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Connecting and Inspiring YPO-WPO's global leaders

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# THE ORIGINAL SOCIAL NETWORK

BY MARY WOODS and MARIDEL ALLINDER



## *From its inception, YPO has always been about connections.*

**WHEN RAY HICKOK** opened the first meeting of a new organization for young presidents on 20 October 1950 at The Waldorf Astoria in New York City, not even he realized the full impact of what was about to transpire among his 50 guests.

At age 27, having returned from military duty in World War II, Hickok found himself presiding over his father's manufacturing business in Rochester, New York. Overwhelmed and challenged with no one to confide in, Hickok, a secretary and two staff assistants began combing reference books in the library looking for executives who fit the description "young president."

Fast forward 62 years. Hickok's vision has become a global organization that connects 20,000 chief executives leading companies generating US\$6 trillion and employing more than 15 million people in 120 countries.

Simple, yet extraordinary in its potential, YPO would improve business practices, connect leaders, encourage personal growth and expand friendships across continents.

Is it the first social network? It's not such a stretch. From a new web platform and mobile apps to 55 Networks and more than 700 Groups to a seemingly never-ending list of in-person and virtual events, YPO-WPO's powerful network continues to connect individual leaders and their families with a place, a priority and a voice.

### **A SEISMIC FORCE CALLED FORUM**

YPO was 25 years old and growing rapidly around the world when four small groups took one chapter to a new level, and in the process, forever changed the interpersonal dynamic of YPO and its membership.

Those small groups, the first Forums, were established in 1975 by the YPO Northern California Chapter. Nearly 40 years later, more than 3,200 Forums around the world share one language and a code of conduct that empowers chief executives and their family members to discuss the most private details of their lives with trusted peers in absolute confidentiality.

"Forum is the single greatest unifying force among members," says international Forum Committee Chair **Jim Schoeneck** (WPO Northern California, WPO Rancho Santa Fe). "Forum is not just our monthly meetings with peers. Forum really is the language of YPO. When we understand Forum protocol and confidentiality, we can communicate with each other in a different way than we do in other parts of our lives, whether it's within our chapter or the international YPO-WPO community."

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In the early years the focus of Forum was strictly business, a place where chief executives could discuss company challenges and know that every word spoken would remain confidential. Before long, members were bringing both personal and professional issues to this valued group of peers.

“Before Forum, the chapter structure lacked a bit of soul,” says 1996-1997 International Chairman **Tim Holmes** (WPO Perth). “Forum added depth and a new dimension.”

Many identify the YPO precursor of Forum as the small groups that have always been the bedrock of the YPO Harvard Presidents’ Program, which celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2012. But even those venerable Harvard Business School groups have adopted the Forum protocols that imbue YPO-WPO’s global network with a commitment to connection, closeness and confidentiality. [Read more about Harvard programs on page 30.]

“Because of Forum,” Schoeneck says, “a YPO member is able to sit down with a fellow member anywhere in the world and have a deeper, more meaningful conversation.”

Given the deep connections and life-changing experiences Forum has offered YPO-WPO’s global community, it isn’t surprising that the traditional member Forum has inspired a family of Forum opportunities.

Half of all spouses and partners participate in Forum, as well as more than 600 youth and young adults. There are couples Forums, international Forums, focus Forums and action Forums. They are all sounding boards, safe havens and ports in a storm — crucial facets of YPO founder Ray Hickok’s vision for the organization.

### THE FAMILY CONNECTION

“My father’s vision of YPO was never intended to be just a business organization, but one in which members and their spouses could convene to share ideas and experiences,” says Tom Hickok, son of founder Ray Hickok.

More than 10 years ago Youth & Family programs became permanent fixtures on the organization’s international events calendar, addressing the needs and interests of spouses, partners, youth and young adults. Today, more than 30 programs span the globe from Canada to China.

“Family programming is vital for YPO-WPO,” says Zeina El-Khalil (spouse, YPO Lebanon), member of the international Family Committee.

El-Khalil has witnessed a great improvement during her 12 years of membership in programming that allows more family participation.

*“My dad would be incredibly proud of what YPO-WPO is today and the electricity and connections that are made.”*

— Tom Hickok

“This is a community of peers committed to lifelong learning and idea exchange and the more the entire family gets involved, the richer it becomes,” she says.

A longstanding favorite among YPO youth is the Junior Leadership University (JLU) in Leysin, Switzerland.

“I definitely think that JLU and other similar programs give me an advantage over other kids,” says Leila Habayeb, daughter of **Nabil Habayeb** (WPO Emirates, WPO Greater MENA). “The speakers and resources were incredible and taught us so much. I think no other programs can compare when it comes to JLU.”

YPO-WPO provides programming plus social networking opportunities for members’ young adult children age 18 and older (YPONextGen), as well as a Global Internship Program, @University groups and YNG city groups. [Read more about the Global Internship Program on page 64 and other YPO-WPO youth opportunities on page 20.]

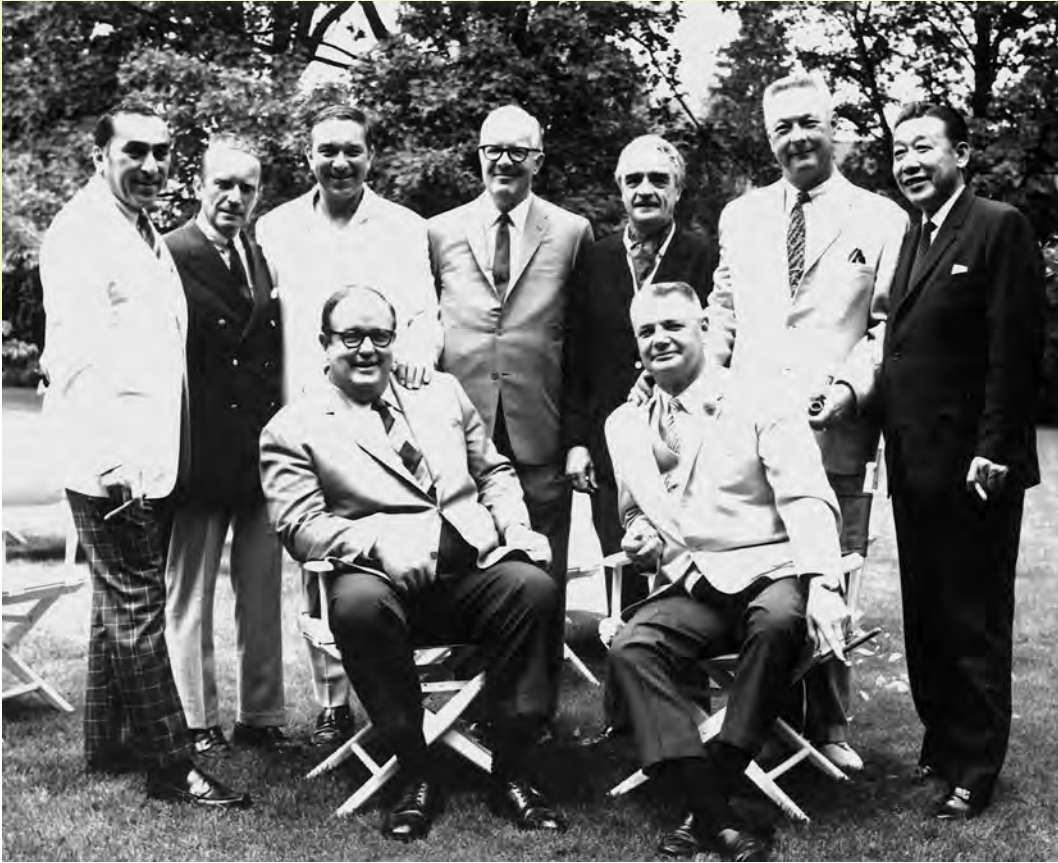
The @University programs are run as traditional member chapter meetings adapted to the university setting, allowing YPO and WPO young adults to build their personal networks, develop relationships through Forum-like activities and attend inspiring events put together by local chapters or @University chapter leadership. There are currently more than 35 @University programs in the United States, Canada and South Africa.

More than a year ago, YPO-WPO found a home at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana through the sons and daughters of current members.

“It is such a blessing to be a part of this incredible community that is YPO,” says David Mastrovich, University of Notre Dame student and son of **Larry Mastrovich** (WPO Pacific US At Large). “The @University program offers students the opportunity to network and share experiences just like our parents.”

With the support of the YPO-WPO International Board, spouses and partners are increasingly expanding their chapter, regional and international

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**Above:**  
**Ray Hickok**,  
seated on the  
right, with  
friends and  
fellow YPOers at  
daughter Holly's  
wedding in 1968.

**Below:**  
Hickok family  
photo circa 1953,  
from left to right,  
**Ray Hickok**,  
daughter Holly,  
son Ray, wife Sally  
with infant son  
Tom on her lap.





Advanced Forum Officers' Workshop team-building activity at 2012 GLC in Singapore.

leadership roles as part of the international Family Committee. Personal and Social Enterprise Networks have opened doors to spouses and partners giving them exclusive access to the powerful YPO-WPO network and its world-class education resources.

The YPO-WPO Harvard Spouse/Partner Program led by Co-chairs Radha Kantipudi (spouse, YPO Hyderabad) and Janet Landucci (spouse, WPO British Columbia) is in its second year and the response has been overwhelming.

"We reached our full capacity again this year," says Landucci, "and our Harvard resources have been extremely impressed with the culturally diverse group. The networking is phenomenal."

[Read more about YPO and WPO spouses and partners on page 70.]

### **NETWORKS: INSTANT ACCESS TO FOCUSED PEER EXCHANGE**

In 2006, building on the legacy of the chapter model and Forum phenomenon, YPO-WPO took networking to a new level with the launch of nearly 60 Networks designed to connect members around business, personal and philanthropic interests. These Networks quickly became a popular extension of the chapter experience — and one of the most powerful advantages of membership.

"Networks have allowed members and spouses to locate each other, communicate and leverage knowledge like never before in the history of the organiza-

tion," says **Jeffrey Rosenthal** (WPO Angeleno, WPO Aspen), one of the founding members involved in the development of YPO-WPO Networks.

Today, nearly 12,000 members belong to 55 Networks that connect them around their industries, passions and social actions. The largest Network, the Deal Global Business Network, has more than 4,000 members. [Read more about the Deal Global Business Network on page 76.] More than 1,000 spouses and partners are also active in Networks.

Through Business Networks in industries as diverse as construction and digital media, Personal Networks for interests from collecting art to competing in triathlons, and Social Enterprise Networks focused on giving back, members find instant access to the cumulative experience of their peers.

"In the next 10 years, I believe Networks will become as important as chapters are today," says Rosenthal.

### **GROUPS: MORE THAN 700 WAYS TO CONNECT**

With the rapid growth and success of Networks, a new dimension for connecting was introduced in 2009: Groups.

Today, more than 700 Groups unite more than 6,000 members around interests as diverse as music and online reputation management. These Groups can be formed by any member, spouse or partner on any topic for any length of time.

**Bernie Tenenbaum** (WPO New Jersey) is one of many members who have embraced Groups. He

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## FORUM

Create your own personal board of directors.  
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## FAMILY

Strengthen the bonds that matter most and open the world of YPO-WPO to your spouse, partner and children.  
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YPO-WPO's virtual video library.  
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founded three: Deadheads in YPO, YPO-WPO in Toys, and Public and Private Company Directors.

As a toy industry executive and fan of the Grateful Dead, Tenenbaum sought a connection to members who shared his interests. A passion for corporate governance also led him to create the Public and Private Company Directors Group, which functions both as a sounding board for members serving as outside directors and as a resource for members seeking experienced board directors for their companies.

"We encourage dialogue at a Forum level among members facing challenges as directors," says Tenenbaum, whose Directors Group is now the largest in YPO-WPO with nearly 350 members. "Members who are searching for effective and experienced board directors also have a great resource in our Group."

## PEER-TO-PEER EDUCATION FOR OFFICERS

Each year since 2000, YPO and WPO incoming chapter, Network and regional officers have convened for Officer Education workshops to gain the tools and knowledge to undertake their roles as chapter and regional leaders. Officer Education is now an annual gathering of "leaders of leaders" at the Global Leadership Conference (GLC). The peer-to-peer education and networking among this group prepares them for new leadership roles and strengthens YPO-WPO.

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In 2012, YPO-WPO introduced new interactive eBooks for each chapter role and education workshops revolving around a participant-centered learning model that strikes a balance between best practices and free-flowing idea exchange.

“We created a new education model and collaborative learning framework,” says GLC Workshops Portfolio Advisory Lead **Sean Magennis** (YPO North Texas), a member of the international Education Committee.

To foster connectedness, the GLC team also introduced member-led conversations in which participants could move fluidly from one group to the next.

“Rather than participants listening to presenters in elective sessions, they chose among 24 conversations convening a diverse range of ideas and questions,” says Magennis.

The energy and connectedness that the GLC fosters keeps members coming back year after year for YPO-WPO’s premier networking and education event: the Global Leadership Summit. [Read more about the 2013 GLC in Istanbul on page 78.]

### FROM THE WALDORF TO THE SUMMIT

In 2012, more than 2,000 members, spouses and partners met in Singapore for the Global Leadership Summit. Southeast Asia hosted its first Summit, which broke records as the largest international event in the organization’s history.

The Summit, which takes place immediately after the GLC Officer Education, is the pinnacle of YPO-WPO idea exchange, and the best place to foster and grow vital connections. Exclusive to members, spouses, partners and invited thought leaders, the Summit is the world’s largest annual gathering of chief executives and YPO-WPO’s ultimate education and networking experience.

“There is such a high level of energy that I find it rewarding to meet such a diversity of members in one place,” says nine-time GLC attendee and 2012 GLC Host Chair **Hester Chew** (WPO Singapore). “This gathering represents how the organization has grown and evolved, yet the intimacy and the one-on-one exchange still exists.”

### A BRAIN TRUST CALLED M2Mx

When it comes to the profusion of power tools in the YPO-WPO networking arsenal, expertise is probably the most powerful. The single greatest reserve of that knowledge is M2Mx (Member-to-Member Exchange).

In an organization known for members’ respect and commitment to each other, M2Mx is the ultimate go-to for trusted information on any topic, from locating a supplier in Shanghai to finding the voice of experience in a medical emergency.

“It never ceases to amaze me the speed at which any M2Mx query is addressed,” says **Ajay Mehta** (YPO Tanzania). “I am increasingly making use of this channel to seek feedback I can rely on.”

Nearly half of all M2Mx requests are business related, as members seek expertise on everything from venture capital to outsourcing. Medical requests comprise 28 percent of M2Mx traffic, while the remainder constitutes personal inquiries on just about any topic.

A new M2Mx mentor program, Lifelines, has been established to provide immediate phone assistance for substance abuse, breast cancer and prostate cancer inquiries. Members with experience in these areas will be available within 24 hours to answer questions. The new program is the brainchild of **Bret Jorgensen** (WPO San Diego) and **Leslie Michelson** (WPO Los Angeles). [To learn more about one member’s experience with M2Mx, refer to the Sound Bites box on page 41.]

### YPO-WPO’S DIGITAL BEGINNINGS AND VISION

Over the years, as member connections burgeoned, it was only natural to plug into the digital revolution and offer an online presence.

In 1998, the MyYPO website launched the organization into cyberspace, connecting chapters across continents and setting in motion initiatives to leverage the web. Today, members’ lives are shaped by YPO-WPO’s evolving technology from the new web platform — YPO-WPO Exchange — to mobile apps, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

“After a decade of underinvestment, we are now at the beginning of a new global connectivity that will change the landscape of the organization,” says 2012-2013 YPO-WPO International Chairman **Chuck Davis**.

Davis chaired the original IT Steering Committee, which convened in July 2010 to oversee a multi-phase technology initiative to meet the needs of a global and diverse membership. Davis’ strategic goals for 2012-2013 focus on what he calls his YPO 2.0 plan.

“The future of YPO depends on the core of global networking and virtual activities,” he says. “It will be about building relationships across borders, not just local geographies.”

The Exchange will ultimately replace MyYPO and





# SOUND BITES

## M2Mx in Real Time

revolutionize how members connect. Using social media and other technologies, it will allow YPO-WPO to leverage the phenomenon of member-to-member communication as one of the organization's most powerful tools.

"Social media, local and international events and calendars linked together, discussion groups, chat friendship circles — this will all eventually be a part of our capabilities," says Davis. "If we are to be leaders of the future, we need the tools to connect."

Davis' ambition secures Hickok's vision in the 21st century.

### THE FUTURE OF CONNECTIVITY: ONLINE AND FACE-TO-FACE

As YPO-WPO continues to enhance its digital offerings, mobility is a forward focus. The organization debuted the first event mobile app at the 2012 GLC in Singapore, allowing participants to access agendas, send photos and comment about speakers and events in real time.

"I saw people sharing experiences and connecting all week long. It made this incredibly large event a really personal experience," recalls Tom Hickok.

YPO-WPO is currently developing new mobile apps to support networking and idea exchange across the organization.

Reflecting on Ray Hickok's remarkable foresight and its evolution over more than six decades, it is clear that YPO-WPO has been transformed by the possibilities of technology while remaining true to its original vision: The power of human interaction — the idea exchange between peers in a trusted environment — inspires better leaders.

As the founder of the original social network put it, "YPO is first, last, and always a uniquely personal experience."

For more than 60 years, YPO has been a chief executives network built on deeply personal connections. Programs have changed and tools have evolved, but the foundation endures. It still takes interested, invested, caring individuals to set in motion the forces that transform lives.

"My dad would be incredibly proud of what YPO-WPO is today and the electricity and connections that are made," says Tom Hickok. "He was at heart, a networking guy." ▲

**Karl Wadensten** (WPO Patriot, WPO New England) was serving on the board of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation in 2010 when former Boston Red Sox baseball pitcher Curt Schilling approached the group with a financing request for a video game company.

Because the loan would take nearly all of the development corporation's financial resources, Wadensten turned to YPO and WPO members for advice through M2Mx and Networks. In the end, Wadensten voted against the loan, but eight other members of the board voted for it and the majority ruled. The group loaned the venture US\$75 million.

Two years later, Wadensten reached out to YPO and WPO members again, this time because the startup was not going to be able to make its loan payment, and media attention would be intense because a celebrity was involved.

Without divulging the details of the impending bankruptcy, Wadensten asked M2Mx and his business Networks for assistance. "URGENT," he wrote. "I immediately need an expert in the Internet gaming industry to offer advice related to a company reaching a pivotal point in its life cycle. We are being beat up by media on an investment and need to determine the next step. Could use some help navigating the unique situation I find myself in. Please contact me if you can help."

Within hours, Wadensten received 45 responses — and a wealth of expertise that helped the board members to reach a decision.

To learn more about the benefits of M2Mx and Networks, visit [www.myyyo.org/m2mx](http://www.myyyo.org/m2mx) and [www.myyyo.org/Networks](http://www.myyyo.org/Networks).

